

Remarks

In response to the Office Action, claims 1-5 have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1-7 are pending.

Claims 1-3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,360,263 to Nakano et al. ("Nakano").

Amended claim 1 recites an interlocking component assembly comprising a plurality of frame components and a plurality of panels, each panel formed integrally with a respective frame, the frame extending about the entire periphery of the panel to form a frame and panel component. Means interconnect a plurality of assembled frame and panel components. The interconnecting means comprises a U-shaped channel formed along the entire periphery of each of the frame components, wherein during assembly the channel of a frame component is inserted within a channel of another frame component to lock the components together along the length thereof.

Nakano does not disclose or suggest an "interconnecting means comprising a U-shaped channel formed along the entire periphery of each of the frame components, wherein during assembly the channel of a frame component is inserted within a channel of another frame component to lock the components together along the length thereof." In contrast, Nakano et al. discloses a flexible flap 90 having locking elements 10 spaced along its length and flexible projections 80 having cavities along its length. Neither flap 90 nor projection 80 is U-shaped. Moreover, the top and bottom of the respective panels P do not have frame component having a U-shaped channel.

Nakano also fails to disclose or suggest "at least one locking tab disposed within the U-shaped channel," as recited in amended claim 2. Locking elements 10 are not located "within the U-shaped channel," but merely project from the flat flap 90.

Likewise, Nakano does not disclose or suggest "at least one aperture disposed within the U-shaped channel." Cavities 20 are disposed on one leg of the L-shaped projection 80.

Because Nakano does not disclose each and every limitation of the claims, Applicant respectfully submits that amended claims 1-3 are allowable over Nakano.

Claim 1 has also been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,296,983 to Rogers et al. ("Rogers").

Rogers does not disclose or suggest “a plurality of panels, each panel formed integrally with a respective frame, said frame extending about the entire periphery of the panel to form a frame and panel component.” Nor does Rogers disclose “a U-shaped channel formed along the entire periphery of each of the frame components, wherein during interconnection the U-shape channel of a frame component is inserted within a U-shaped channel of another frame component to lock the components together along the length thereof.”

Rogers merely discloses hook members arranged on vertical rear joints of a steel cabinet. Thus, a side panel 20 of Rogers does not have a frame component that extends around its entire periphery. Moreover, Rogers’ hook members comprise a reverse flange 14 with fold 4 is not received within a U-shaped channel “formed along the entire periphery of each of the frame components.” Thus, Rogers does not anticipate claim 1.

Claims 4-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakano.

Amended claim 4 recites a method of interlocking a plurality of frame and panel components comprising the steps of providing a plurality of integral frame and panel components; and interconnecting a plurality of assembled frame and panel components, wherein each of the plurality of frames include a U-shaped channel formed along the entire periphery of each of the frame components, wherein during interconnection the U-shaped channel of a frame component is inserted within a U-shaped channel of another frame component to lock the components together along the length thereof.

It would not be obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to insert the U-shaped channel of a frame component “within a U-shaped channel of another frame component to lock the components together along the length thereof,” because Nakano does not disclose any U-shaped channels as discussed above.

Accordingly claims 4-7 are also allowable over Nakano.

Claims 2-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rogers in view of Nakano.

Nakano does not cure the deficiencies of Rogers, because Nakano does not disclose or suggest “at least one locking tab disposed within the U-shaped channel,” as recited in claim 2.

One having ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to modify Rogers as suggested by the Examiner because Nakano does not even disclose the claimed structure.

The Examiner takes the position that it would be "inherent" to one skilled in the art to perform the steps of method claims 4-7. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Under the principles of inherency, if a prior art device, *in its normal and usual operation*, would necessarily perform the method claimed, then the method claimed will be considered to be anticipated by the prior art device. See MPEP 2112. Rogers would not perform the method in its normal operation for the reasons stated above.

Given the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art, either alone or in combination, does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention. Therefore, the application is in condition for allowance. A prompt passage to issuance is therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: November 15, 2005

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